UNITED
NATIONS

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Security Council

Distr.
GENERAL

S/1998/815
28 August 1998

ORIGINAL: ENGLISH

LETTER DATED 26 AUGUST 1998 FROM THE PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE OF GEORGIA TO THE UNITED NATIONS ADDRESSED TO THE PRESIDENT OF THE SECURITY COUNCIL

Upon instructions from my Government, I have the honour to inform you that, on 24 August 1998, there was a terrorist explosion in the city of Zugdidi, located in the security zone, killing two, including an underaged child, and wounding 55.

The explosion occurred in the regional administrative building, and the number of casualties would have been far greater if not for the incidental postponement of a large gathering that day.

The Government of Georgia intends to evaluate the above-mentioned incident after the investigation has been completed.

It is clear that the explosion is nothing but a treacherous provocation, intended to destabilize the situation in the conflict zone and in all of Georgia.

Deeply concerned at this horrible act, the Government of Georgia deems it necessary to focus the Security Council's attention on the situation which remains tense, within the framework of the United Nations Observer Mission, and believes that the perpetrated terrorist act must be viewed in the context of this situation.

Right after the adoption of the Security Council resolution of 31 July 1998, with the assistance of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General, and the countries and organizations involved in the process of the conflict settlement, it became possible to intensify Georgian-Abkhaz bilateral contacts and to repatriate some of the displaced persons from the Gali region.

The Government of Georgia is taking concrete measures to prevent the activities of the uncontrolled armed groups and calls upon all parties not to allow, and to participate in joint efforts to prevent, terrorist acts, diversions, assaults and kidnappings.

In his weekly address to the people of Georgia, President Eduard Shevardnadze elaborated on the implementation of the 31 July resolution of the Security Council on Georgia. While expressing the firm position of the Georgian authorities, he severely condemned "all forms and manifestation of terrorism and diversions, no matter who perpetrates these acts and where it comes from".

Work is being conducted to find new approaches, ways and channels to reconcile the Georgians and the Abkhazians. The Government of Georgia and the President of Georgia express their readiness for comprehensive, useful and yielding contacts.

The Government of Georgia remains committed to its proposal to create joint groups for the investigation of crimes and for the elaboration of measures for their prevention.

Under the current circumstances, it is impossible not to express strong resentment at the ongoing coercive actions against the returnees from the Gali region, or at the increasingly subversive actions from the right bank of the Inguri river, that is, from the territory controlled by the Abkhaz side.

The shooting from automatic weapons in the direction of Zugdidi and Georgian villages in other regions of the security zone has a systematic character.

On 3 August 1998, the village of Shamgona, in the Zugdidi district, was subjected to intense shooting from machine-guns. On 10 August 1998, a large group of boeviks that got over to the left bank of the Inguri river opened fire with automatic weapons and grenade launchers on the peaceful population of the villages of Shamgona and Rukhi. During the same night, the boeviks attacked the village of New Abastumani. A number of civilians were injured, and material damage was inflicted as a result of this bandit attack. On their way back, the assaulters mined the territory adjacent to the village.

There is corroborating evidence that mines have been laid in the Gali region, resulting in serious injuries among the civilian population and jeopardizing the personnel of the observer mission and the peacekeepers.

Facts have been uncovered about the smuggling of weapons and of military equipment in the territory of Abkhazia, Georgia and about the introduction of armed groups into the region from outside Georgia.

The Government of Georgia expresses hope that the United Nations will duly assess the current situation and will not delay taking active measures to promote the peace process, to support the existing positive initiatives in this direction, to take all measures to prevent the exacerbation of the dispute.

We express hope that the proposals of the interested sides on the improvement of security conditions, on the promotion of the negotiating process and on bilateral contacts will be duly reflected in the forthcoming report of the Secretary-General on Georgia.

I should be grateful if you would have the text of the present letter circulated as a document of the Security Council.

(Signed) Peter CHKHEIDZE
Ambassador
Permanent Representative